

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEDELL 00172 041739Z

46

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 IO-13 JUSE-00

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INFO USCUSTOMS WASHDC

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

DEA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

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MEXICO FOR CUSTOMS ATTACHE

CARACIA FOR DEA

BOGOTA FOR NARCO AND ECON

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR, CO

SUBJECT: NARCOTICS: PROBLEMS OF VESSELS CHARTERED BY UNION
DE BANANEROS DE URABA

1. DURING CONVERSATIONS JULY 28, 29, AND AUG. 2, DR. RODRIGO
JIMENEZ, MANAGER OF UNION DE BANANEROS DE URABA (UNIBAN),
INFORMED PRINCIPAL OFFICER REGARDING COMPANY'S INCREASING PROBLEMS
BECAUSE OF NARCOTICS FOUND ABOARD THEIR SHIPS IN FLORIDA
PORTS. JIMENEZ EMPHASIZED EFFORTS BEING MADE BY UNIBAN AND
GOC TO CONTROL NARCOTICS TRAFFIC AND PLEADED FOR UNDERSTANDING
OF THESE EFFORTS ON PART OF AMERICAN LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS
AT ALL LEVELS. DETAILS OF CONVERSATIONS AS FOLLOWS:

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PAGE 02 MEDELL 00172 041739Z

A.) COMPANY BACKGROUND: UNIBAN SHIPS BANANAS WEEKLY FROM

TURBO TO PORT OF TAMPA. TWO MAJOR FLORIDA CUSTOMERS ARE PARKER BANANA COMPANY (A U. S. FIRM BASED IN TAMPA) AND TURBANA BANANA (AN UNIBAN SUBSIDIARY) IN CORAL GABLES.

B.) SEIZURES OF COMPANY'S VESSELS: PRINCIPAL VESSELS ON TURBO-TAMPA RUN HAVE BEEN LIBIAN FLAG FREIGHTERS "EA" AND "SIRARA". VESSELS AJS CHARTERED FROM DAMMERS AND VAN DER GEIDE, BOOMPJES 17, ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS. VESSEL "EA" WAS SEIZED BY TAMPA CUSTOMS OFFICIALS JUNE 17, WHEN SOME 180 POUNDS OF NARCOTICS (COCAINE) WERE DISCOVERED ABOARD FOR FOURTH TIME IN PAST YEAR. "EA" IS STILL BEING HELD IN TAMPA, WHILE HEARINGS ON CASE CONTINUE. ON JULY 16, TWENTY POUNDS OF COCAINE WAS FOUND ABOARD "SIRARA", BUT VESSEL WAS RELEASED UNDER BOND AS FIRST OFFENDER.

C.) UNIBAN CONTROL EFFORTS. UNIBAN CURRENTLY HAS FIFTEEN AGENTS OF COLOMBIAN SECURITY SERVICES (CIVILIAN AND MILITARY)) DIRECTLY ON ITS PAYROLL, AND IS PROVIDING TRANSPORT, LODGING, AND FOOD FOR NUMEROUS ADDITIONAL AGENTS IN TURBO ZONE. AGENTS CONTINUALLY CHECK ON POSSIBLE NARCOTICS INVOLVEMENT, BALANCES IN BANK ACCOUNTS, AND SUDDEN INCREASES IN AFFLUENCE OF EMPLOYEES OF UNIBAN. ANY EMPLOYEE (SIX THIS YEAR) WHO IS SUSPECT, IS FIRED OUT OF HAND. STRICT MEASURES ARE APPLIED WHEN IN TURBO PORT, WITH NO SHORE LEAVE ALLOWED FOR CREW, VISITORS TO SHIP RESTRICTED, ONLY ONE ACCESS DOOR LEFT OPEN, AND WATER AND OTHER SUPPLIES CONTROLLED. UNIBAN ALSO PAYS TWO PRIVATE GUARDS IN TAMPA TO SEARCH PERSONNEL DISEMBARKING OR BOARDING SHIP, AS WELL AS VEHICLES UNLOADING OR LOAD LG CARVF.

D.) GOC CONTROL EFFORTS. ENTIRE REGION OF URABA, OF WHICH TURBO IS PRINCIPAL PORT, HAS BEEN PLACED UNDER MILITARY CONTROL, BECAUSE OF UPSURGE IN CRIMINAL AND GUERRILLA-INSPIRED VIOLENCE (84 PERSONS MURDERED THUS FAR IN 1976). URABA HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN LAWLESS, FRONTIER ZONE, BUT ITS PROBLEMS HAVE NOW ESCALATED TO OCCUPY PRESIDENTIAL-LEVEL ATTENTION. ARMY OFFICERS HAVE BEEN NAMED AS MAYORS OF PRINCIPAL TOWNS (INCLUDING TURBO), NUMBER OF XDGES HAS BEEN INCREASED, AND SECURITY FORCES HAVE BEEN REINFORCED. CRACKDOWN ON DRUG TRAFFIC THROUGHOUT REGION IS PRIME OBJECTIVE OF GOC'S MEASURES. UNIBAN SHIPS ARE UNSPECTED BY CUSTOMS OFFICIALS ON ARRIVAL TO TURBO AND ARE MAINTAINED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MEDELL 00172 041739Z

UNDER CONTINUAL CUSTOMS GUARD WHILE THERE. VESSELS DO NOT DOCK, BECAUSE OF LIMITED PORT FACILITIES. RATHER, THEY REMAIN OUT IN URBA GULF AND ARE LOADED AND UNLOADED BY MEANS OF LIGHTERS. AGENTS OF DAS AND F-2 IN TURBO PORT ASSIST IN CHECKING SMALL CRAFT BOUND FOR THE SHIP.

E.) EKBECTELGN UNIBAN OPERATIONS. SEIZURES OF CHARTERED VESSELS AND COSTS OF CONTROL MEASURES HAVE CAUSED UNIBAN HEAVY FINANCIAL LOSSES. CHARTERING COMPANIES HAVE MORE THAN DOUBLED

RATES, BECAUSE OF SEIZURE RISK IN FLORIDA PORTS. SALARIES FOR FIFTEEN AGENTS ON DIRECT PAYROLL AND SUBSIDIES (LODGING, TRANSPORT, ETC.) FOR OTHERS HAVE RAISED COSTS, AS HAVE FIRINGS OF EMPLOYEES (WITH SEVERANCEPAY), HIRING OF GUARDS IN TAMPA, AND OTHER MEASURES. AS RESULT "EA" SEIZURE, UNIBAN HAS BEEN SHIPPING AT HALF NORMAL VOLUME AND RISKS LOSING PART OF MARKET.

F.) ACTION REQUESTED BY UNIBAN. JIMENEZ PLEADED FOR CONSULATE, DEA BOGOTA, AND NARCOR BOGOTA ASSISTANCE IN MAKING KNOWN UNIBAN AND GOC EFFORTS TO CONTROL NARCOTICS ABOARD COMPANY'S VESSELS TO OUR GOVERNMENTAL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS AT ALL LEVELS. ACCORDING JIMENEZ, "THEY BELIEVE THAT WE ARE NOT DOING ANYTHING DOWN HERE AND THAT WE DON'T CARE; THAT'S JUST NOT TRUE."

2. COMMENT: JIMENEZ HAS COOPERATED CLOSELY AND FULLY WITH DEA BOGOTA, NARCOR, AND CONSULATE IN ATTEMPT TO CONTROL NARCOTICS ABOARD UNIBAN VESSELS. WHILE DIFFICULTIES OF COMPANY MAY BE SLIGHTLY EXAGGERATED FOR EFFECT, WE DO NOT DOUBT SINCERITY OF HIS DESIRE TO HALT NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. IN REPLY TO JIMENEZ' PRESENTATION, WHICH ALSO INCLUDED REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN PURCHASING TWO DOGS TRAINED TO DETECT COCAINE, PRINCIPAL OFFICER INDICATED HE WOULD CONVEY JIMENEZ' CONCERNS TO APPROPRIATE USG OFFICIALS. HOWEVER, PRINCIPAL OFFICER AGAIN EMPHASIZED TO JIMENEZ THAT BURDEN OF CONTROL OF NARCOTICS ABOARD UNIBAN VESSELS MUST FALL ON COMPANY AND GOC AUTHORITIES, AND THAT THESE AUTHORITIES IN BEST POSITION TO ASSIST HIM WITH DOGS AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS.

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